

How the Maternal and Child Health Block Grant Helps Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs

Family Voices is an organization of families whose children have special health care needs, such as disabilities or chronic illnesses. These children and their families depend upon the infrastructure and programs made possible through the Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Services Block Grant, authorized under Title V of the Social Security Act.

The Maternal and Child Health Block Grant helps states to sustain their public health infrastructure, services, and education aimed at improving the health of women, infants and children, including children and youth with special health care needs (CYSHCN).

In fact, **30 percent of a state's block-grant funds must go toward providing services to this high-needs population** – children and youth with a variety of disabilities and chronic illnesses, such as autism, epilepsy, sickle cell disease, cerebral palsy, asthma, diabetes, mental illness, muscular dystrophy, Down syndrome, and brain injury.

State MCH programs help CYSHCN and their families in a number of ways. They –

- Help to ensure that children are screened for developmental problems.
- Help families find professionals to diagnose and treat their children.
- Help to build an infrastructure to ensure the provision of family-centered, community-based, coordinated care for CYSHCN.
- Gather data on the needs of CYSHCN and their families, thus helping policy makers to more effectively design programs to help them.
- Support other federally funded programs, such as community health centers, Healthy Start, CHIP and Medicaid, by conducting needs assessments and coordinating with other health programs to assure that funding is maximized and services are not duplicated.
- May serve as the payer of last resort for direct services not covered by any other programs.
- Help to prevent disabilities and chronic health conditions by promoting good prenatal care.

Family Voices State Affiliate Organizations and the federally funded Family-to-Family Health Information Centers (F2Fs) work with Title V grantees to ensure that CYSHCN and their families receive the services they need. F2Fs – one in each state and the District of Columbia – are funded by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau to connect families whose children have special health care needs and help them navigate the health care system.

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